

**REPORT/RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
OF SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA
AND RECORD OF ACTION**

August 12, 2003

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FROM: CATHY CIMBALO, Director
Department of Children's Services

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION FOR EMPLOYEE OUT-OF-COUNTRY TRAVEL

RECOMMENDATION: Authorize out-of-country travel to Mexico City, Mexico for Department of Children's Services Social Services Practitioner Stephanie Buehner to assess the progress of the mother in completing the reunification plan and the home of the maternal grandparents as a possible placement for three siblings, at a cost not to exceed \$ 1,320.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION: The children, ages 9, 3, and 1, are United States citizens, and have been placed locally in a foster home since November 2002. The minors' parents were deported as illegal aliens to Mexico earlier this year after being incarcerated due to drug charges. The mother has been working with the Mexican Consulate to complete a service plan to reunify in with her children in Mexico. The father has not received any reunification services to date and lives in another state in Mexico. Ms Buehner has requested information about the father from the Mexican government but has received none.

Concurrently, the maternal grandmother has agreed to take custody of the minors if reunification with the mother is not possible. A home study of the maternal grandmother's ability to care for the children has been completed by the Mexican government. Ms Buehner has been working with the Mexican Consulate regarding both the mother and maternal grandparents for possible placement of the children with either of them.

On July 15, 2003, the Juvenile Court ordered Ms. Buehner to go to Mexico to personally assess the mother's progress in completing the family reunification service plan and the maternal grandparent's home as a possible placement. Ms. Buehner will need to locate the various service providers the mother has been involved with and assess services provided, as well as evaluating the maternal grandparents ability to provide a placement for the children. Ms. Buehner must provide a report to the Court by September 11, 2003.

The travel to and from Mexico City, Mexico, is anticipated to occur between August 13, 2003, and September 10, 2003.

Pursuant to County Travel Policy, as amended November 23, 1992, Board approval is required for all out-of-country travel.

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REVIEW BY OTHERS: This item has been reviewed by County Counsel (Sandra Baxter, Supervising Deputy County Counsel) on July 28, 2003, HSS Finance (Kristin Letterman, Administrative Manager) on July 30, 2003, and the County Administrative Office (Gary Morris, Administrative Analyst) on July 31, 2003.

FINANCIAL IMPACT: The estimated cost of travel, meals, and lodging is approximately \$ 1,320 depending on airfare discount availability. These expenditures are approximately 90% federal and state funded (\$1,188) and 10% local share funded (\$132). The local share is funded approximately 52% (\$69) with Realignment revenues and 48% local cost (\$63). Adequate appropriations and revenues were included in the HSS Administrative FY 03/04 Budget.

Cost Reduction Review: The County Administrative Office has reviewed this agenda item and recommends this action based on that the fact that approval of this travel is critical for the health, welfare, and safety of the three children.

SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT(S): All.

PRESENTER: Cathy Cimbalo, Director of Children's Services (388-0242)

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